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PROBABLE SHORT-TERM COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS REGARDING BERLIN

Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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Concurred in by the

INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

on 28 February 1956. Concurring were the Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Director of Intelligence, USAF; and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the IAC and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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1

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PROBABLE SHORT-TERM COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS REGARDING BERLIN

THE PROBLEM

To estimate short-term Communist capabilities and intentions regarding Berlin.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Though recent Communist statements and actions affecting Berlin carry an implicit challenge to the Four Power status of the city, we believe that the USSR will not now attempt to force the Western Powers out of Berlin. The present Soviet objective is probably limited to bringing about recognition of the East German regime. (*Paras. 5, 14-15*)

2. In seeking to achieve this objective, the USSR can employ a wide range of actions designed to force West Germany and the Western Powers to deal with the East German regime. These actions could include East German infringements of Allied rights of occupation and access, obstruction of the movement of Allied and German persons and goods, and interference in the civil order of the Western sectors. (*Paras. 6, 9-11, 18*)

3. Since the Soviet leaders probably believe that severe pressure in Berlin would frustrate their present objectives both in Germany and in the world political contest generally, we believe that they will exercise care to prevent a major crisis.

We believe the USSR may attempt to transfer control functions over Allied civilian activities to East German authorities but will retain control over matters directly concerned with the military occupation status of Berlin and Allied military access thereto. (*Paras. 13-14, 16, 19-20*)

4. The danger of serious incidents in Berlin will remain, however, particularly if the Soviet leaders come to estimate that the present political and military risks of aggressive action in Berlin have been reduced by a serious deterioration in Western strength and determination.¹ (*Para. 17*)

¹ The Director of Intelligence, USAF, believes that paragraph 4 should read as follows:

The danger of serious incidents in Berlin will remain however. Extensive Soviet strengths will be retained in the area which could be used easily for harsh actions against the Western position in Berlin. The USSR might risk such harsh action at any time, particularly if there were an obvious serious deterioration of Western political and psychological strengths in Europe or a commitment of Western strengths elsewhere that Soviet leaders might hope to divert.

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DISCUSSION

I. PRESENT SITUATION²

5. Developments in Soviet-East German relations and recent incidents in Berlin raise the possibility of a renewed Communist effort to change the status quo in Berlin. In particular, by the Soviet-East German treaty of 20 September 1955, and its associated documents, the USSR has laid the groundwork for transferring to the East German regime authority over the Soviet sector of Berlin and over access to the city. The USSR is thus in a position to disavow both its obligations under the Four Power agreements and its responsibility for acts which the East German regime might take. Although the Soviet-East German agreements represent a Soviet effort to create a new legal situation, the actual situation in Berlin remains essentially unchanged, with rights of Allied occupation being observed and with access to Berlin being handled much as before.

6. However, progressive application of the provisions of the Soviet-East German agreements could be used by the USSR to bring pressure on the other occupying Powers and West Germany to deal directly with the East German regime. If in these circumstances the Western Powers refuse to deal with the East German regime, the difficulty of maintaining their position in Berlin could be aggravated.

II. COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES WITH RESPECT TO BERLIN

7. The Communists have extensive capabilities to bring pressure on the Western position in Berlin by employing a variety of military, economic, administrative, and subversive means.

8. Communist armed forces far outnumber those of the West in the Berlin area and the Communists could seize the Western sectors at any time. The three Western Powers have in Berlin only a token force of approximately

7,000 combat troops. The 16,000 man West Berlin police force is only lightly armed. As against this, the USSR has two regiments permanently stationed on the outskirts of Berlin, and major elements of three Soviet mechanized armies within a few hours' march of the city. In addition, there is an East German mechanized division in the immediate vicinity, as well as some 17,000 militarized security troops.

9. West Berlin is also economically vulnerable to Communist harassment. Located 110 miles inside East Germany and largely isolated from surrounding Communist territory, West Berlin depends for its economic survival upon regular movements of goods to and from West Germany.³ Virtually all of these goods are carried by road, rail, and water transport. Communist capabilities to harass or interdict these facilities range all the way from minor administrative harassment to imposing a total land blockade. As examples of intermediate steps to serve particular purposes, the Communists could block the shipment of certain West Berlin exports in order to reduce West German confidence in the ability of Berlin's industry to maintain deliveries, or could interfere in varying degrees with West Berlin's postal and telecommunications facilities.

10. The Communists could interfere with Western air movements to and from West Berlin by: (a) direct attack upon Western aircraft, and (b) measures short of such attack. In the latter instance a principal Communist effort would probably be directed toward jamming of Allied communications. Such jamming of Western radar and radio would, especially under night and adverse weather conditions, make corridor air traffic hazardous and impair Western ability to perform air lift operations in the Berlin area.

11. The Communists could also exploit the physical arrangements within the city to harass the Western Powers, to complicate

² For detailed information on the present situation in Berlin see Appendix.

³ West Berlin's stockpiles of food and fuel are now sufficient to sustain the city for about a year.

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the functioning of civil government in the Western sectors, and to confront the Western Powers with serious political problems. The East Germans could take advantage of the relatively free access to the Western sectors to incite mass demonstrations, to create public disorders, and to generate a feeling of insecurity through such actions as sabotage or kidnapping. As part of such a war of nerves or as a means of testing Western determination, the East Germans could infiltrate armed groups into the West Berlin area. The Communists could also interfere with the few utilities which still serve both parts of the city. By severing the two city-wide transport systems and by imposing tight controls along the border between East and West Berlin, the Communists could substantially reduce the number of East German refugees able to reach West Berlin, and increase the isolation of the Western sectors.

III. SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND PROBABLE COURSES OF ACTION

12. The long-range Soviet objective is to achieve a Western withdrawal from Berlin. The Western presence in Berlin is clearly inconsistent with the consolidation of Communist control over East Germany and threatens the prestige and security of the East German regime. Also West Berlin is an important base for Western intelligence activities. Moreover, the Soviet leaders probably calculate that such a withdrawal would notably decrease West German morale and would aid in the attainment of Communist objectives with respect to West Germany.

13. However, we believe that there are important limitations on the price the Soviet leaders would pay for control over all Berlin. They almost certainly do not now regard the elimination of the Western Powers from Berlin as warranting the risk of general war or of undermining their present pose of peaceful intent throughout the world.

14. Moreover, the USSR almost certainly recognizes that forceful measures against the Western position in Berlin would adversely affect the achievement of short-term Soviet objectives for Germany as a whole. Over the

past year, the USSR has established diplomatic relations with West Germany and has attempted to place the German question within the framework of intra-German discussions. For the present, Soviet policy appears based on the premise of a divided Germany, and aims at achieving international recognition for the East German regime. The Soviet leaders appear to believe that this aim can be furthered by creating situations which would cause the West German government to deal directly with the East German regime.

15. We believe that current Communist moves in Berlin are intended to reinforce this general line of policy. Communist statements and actions in the Berlin area strongly indicate that the present Soviet intent is to induce the West German government to negotiate directly with East Germany on the ministerial level and thus to establish a form of de facto recognition.

16. In their efforts to use the Berlin situation as a means of gaining recognition for the East German regime, the Soviet leaders will probably be influenced by these considerations:

a. The Communists will probably wish to move slowly and cautiously, recognizing that a sudden or dramatic move would increase the risk of producing a potentially dangerous Western reaction and of undermining the current Soviet campaign to increase the contacts between East and West Germany.

b. The USSR will probably not wish to contravene openly the quadripartite agreements on Berlin. It will probably wish to keep channels of communication with the Western Powers open if only to retain a legal basis for intervening in disputes which it would prefer that the East German regime not handle.

c. Although stringent restrictions against West Berlin would reduce the flow of refugees, hamper the effectiveness of Western intelligence operations, and create economic as well as political problems, it would also have its disadvantages for the Communists. Such a policy would obstruct East Germany's objective of increasing its contacts with West Germany. Moreover, the possibility of various Western countermeasures which would aggra-

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vate East German economic difficulties would exist, including denial of transportation routes through West Germany, a West German embargo on interzonal shipments, and perhaps even stiffened Western trade controls.

17. Although we believe that the above limitations will act as a brake on Communist actions in Berlin, the danger of serious incidents will remain, particularly if the Soviet leaders come to estimate that the present political and military risks of aggressive action in Berlin have been reduced by a serious deterioration in Western strength and determination.⁴

IV. PROBABLE SPECIFIC MEASURES

18. As indicated in the preceding section, we believe that the USSR will not now attempt to force the Western Powers out of Berlin. However, West Berlin's isolated position places a very wide range of actions at the disposal of the Communists in seeking to reach the more limited objectives they now have, and it is likely that a variety of pressures will be generally maintained and from time to time increased. The nature and extent of Western responses to these pressures will in turn influence the further development of Communist activity vis-a-vis Berlin.

19. We believe that the USSR will attempt to transfer to East Germany more and more

⁴ The Director of Intelligence, USAF, believes that paragraph 17 should read as follows:

The danger of serious incidents in Berlin will remain however. Extensive Soviet strengths will be retained in the area which could be used easily for harsh actions against the Western position in Berlin. The USSR might risk such harsh action at any time, particularly if there were an obvious serious deterioration of Western political and psychological strengths in Europe or a commitment of Western strengths elsewhere that Soviet leaders might hope to divert.

authority over West German and Allied civilian access to Berlin and over East Berlin itself. We believe that the Communists may attempt to distinguish between Allied military and Allied civilian activities, and to transfer control functions over the latter to East German authorities. They may, for example, refuse to permit Allied civilians to proceed to and from Berlin by road or rail solely on Allied movement orders and require them to possess East German authorization as well. If the USSR is successful in transferring to the East German regime control functions over Allied civilian activities, it might be encouraged to attempt more extensive infringements of Allied rights.

20. However, the USSR is unlikely to denounce the Four Power agreements concerning Berlin. In particular, we believe that the USSR will retain control over matters directly concerned with the military occupation status of Berlin and Allied military access thereto.

21. The strongest and most direct pressures will probably be brought to bear upon the West Germans and West Berliners. The Communists will probably continue to harass and delay West German truck traffic by a variety of impediments. Similar tactics will probably be applied to rail and barge communications between West Germany and Berlin. The people and authorities in West Berlin will probably also be subjected to various acts of intimidation and embarrassment. Such measures would be intended not only to undermine morale in West Berlin, but to bring pressure upon the West Germans to reach a settlement with the East German regime. The East Germans will probably also impose tighter restrictions on passage between the Eastern and Western sectors of Berlin in an attempt to reduce the flow of refugees, although this border will probably not be completely closed.

APPENDIX

PRESENT SITUATION IN BERLIN

I. LEGAL ASPECTS

Western Position. The Western Powers contend that all of Berlin is legally still under Four Power occupation and that the USSR is responsible for the maintenance of adequate communications between West Berlin and West Germany to meet both the needs of the population and the Allied garrisons in the city. They hold, further, that their right to be in Berlin and the right of unrestricted access for their forces are inseparable.

The Western position is based on a complex of wartime and postwar agreements. These include:

a. The agreements of the European Advisory Commission in the fall of 1944 establishing the occupation status of Berlin;

b. The letters which President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill exchanged with Marshal Stalin in June 1945 regarding the movement of American, British, and Soviet forces into their respective zones of occupation and sectors in Berlin with provision for access to Berlin by rail, road, and air for American and British forces;

c. The implementing agreements of the American, British, and Soviet military commands in June 1945, establishing three air corridors, one approach by rail, and one by road;

d. The agreements on Berlin access reached in the Allied Control Council formalizing the previous agreements; and

e. The Soviet-Western agreements of May and June 1949 whereby the blockade of Berlin was lifted by restoring the status quo as of 1 March 1948, and the USSR assumed responsibility for the "normal functioning and utilization of rail, water, and road transport" between West Berlin and West Germany.

The granting of sovereignty to West Germany has not altered the special status of

West Berlin or the international legal situation with regard to access to Berlin. Matters pertaining to Berlin are a reserved power retained by the US, the UK, and France in the treaty granting West Germany sovereignty.

Soviet Position. The legal structure on which the Western position is based has been seriously challenged only once by the USSR. In July 1948 the Soviet government asserted that the Western Powers had forfeited their right to be in Berlin because they had violated the major Four Power agreements on Germany and thus voided the basic agreements on Berlin since these were an inseparable part of the over-all arrangements for Germany. After the lifting of the blockade and restoration of the status quo the issue remained dormant until 20 September 1955 when a treaty granting East Germany full sovereignty was concluded between the Soviet and East German governments.

An accompanying exchange of letters between East German Foreign Minister Bolz and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin provided that:

a. East Germany should carry out protective and control duties along its borders on the demarcation line between East Germany and the Federal Republic, along the periphery of Greater Berlin, and within Berlin;

b. East Germany should exercise control functions over road, rail, and water communications between the Federal Republic and West Berlin, and should settle all related problems with the West German government whether they involved West German citizens or citizens of foreign states, with the exception of troops and materiel of the Western Powers; and

c. control over Allied military movement between West Berlin and the Federal Republic

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6

over the established air and land routes should be retained by the USSR "temporarily, until an appropriate agreement is concluded."

Although the Soviet-East German agreements represent a Soviet effort to create a new legal situation, since the transfer of responsibility to East Germany contravenes the obligation assumed by the USSR in June 1949 as well as several Allied Control Council agreements on Berlin access, the actual situation remains essentially much as it was before 20 September 1955. The East German authorities have in practice long exercised control over German traffic moving by rail, road, and water between West Berlin and West Germany. Moreover, in actual practice the Soviet authorities continue to control Allied civilian as well as military traffic.

The current Soviet position on the Four Power status of Berlin is not completely clear. The USSR vested East Germany with control functions "within Berlin" in the Bolz-Zorin exchange; Soviet representatives in Germany have recently asserted that East German law is applicable in East Berlin; and East German propaganda has accused the Western Powers of destroying the Four Power status of the city. Nevertheless, East Berlin has not been formally integrated into East Germany. In fact, the special status is still being observed.

II. ACCESS

The principal vulnerability of West Berlin and Allied personnel in Berlin to Communist pressure stems from the fact that all goods and persons moving between West Berlin and West Germany must cross at least 110 miles of Communist-controlled territory. Moreover, all movement must take place on certain designated routes. At present, traffic is moving over all the designated routes without significant restrictions; postal, radio, and telecommunications as well are not being subjected to interference.

Road. There are four roads which are currently being used for highway traffic between West Berlin and West Germany: Berlin-Hamburg, Berlin-Helmstedt, Berlin-Gera-Wartha, and Berlin-Hof. In 1954 these roads carried

41 percent of the total freight tonnage moving into West Berlin and 56 percent of the outgoing tonnage.

The most important of these highways is the Berlin-Helmstedt *Autobahn*. This road not only carries the major part of the freight and vehicular traffic but is also the only highway Allied personnel can use without obtaining prior Soviet permission.

Allied use of the *Autobahn* derives from the decision of the American, British, and Soviet commands in June 1945 to make this road available to the American and British forces. The Soviet commitment to maintain West German road access to Berlin does not specify particular highway routes.

Rail. Transportation by rail between West Berlin and West Germany in 1954 accounted for 35 percent of the inbound and 19 percent of the outbound freight tonnage. All Allied freight and passenger trains as well as all inbound German freight trains and some German passenger trains use the Berlin-Helmstedt rail line. The use of this line was established by the June 1945 agreement and subsequently in the Allied Control Council. Additional rail lines are available for outbound freight and German passenger traffic to and from West Berlin through direct agreement between the East and West German railroad authorities. The East German *Reichsbahn* owns the rail facilities in the Soviet zone and Berlin, and all rolling stock transiting the Soviet zone is hauled by East German locomotives.

Waterways. Berlin is at the hub of an extensive canal and river network. Twenty-three percent of all inbound and 18 percent of all outbound freight tonnage was moved by barge in 1954.

In May 1951 the Soviet and British authorities agreed on control arrangements for interzonal barge traffic. This agreement was renewed annually until the end of 1954 when the Soviet authorities permitted it to lapse and referred the matter to the East Germans. Nevertheless, the validity of the barge permits issued on the basis of the May 1951 agreement continued to be recognized; in fact, the Soviet authorities continued to discharge their func-

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tions under the terms of the expired agreement. In October 1955 the Soviet authorities notified the British that thenceforth the East Germans would exercise control functions. The British in October 1955 transferred their control functions to the West German authorities. While applications for new barge permits pending at the time were returned, the validity of existent permits continues to remain unchallenged.

Air. All Allied planes use three corridors in flying into and out of West Berlin: Berlin-Hamburg, Berlin-Hannover, and Berlin-Frankfurt. These corridors were established by the American, British, and Soviet military commands in June 1945 and subsequently confirmed in the Allied Control Council. In addition a quadripartite Berlin Air Safety Center was established in West Berlin. Its principal function is to act as a channel for communicating Western flight plans to the Soviet authorities.

Air access to Berlin is of particular importance because it is the only means of transportation which can be used by persons who are politically endangered, such as East Ger-

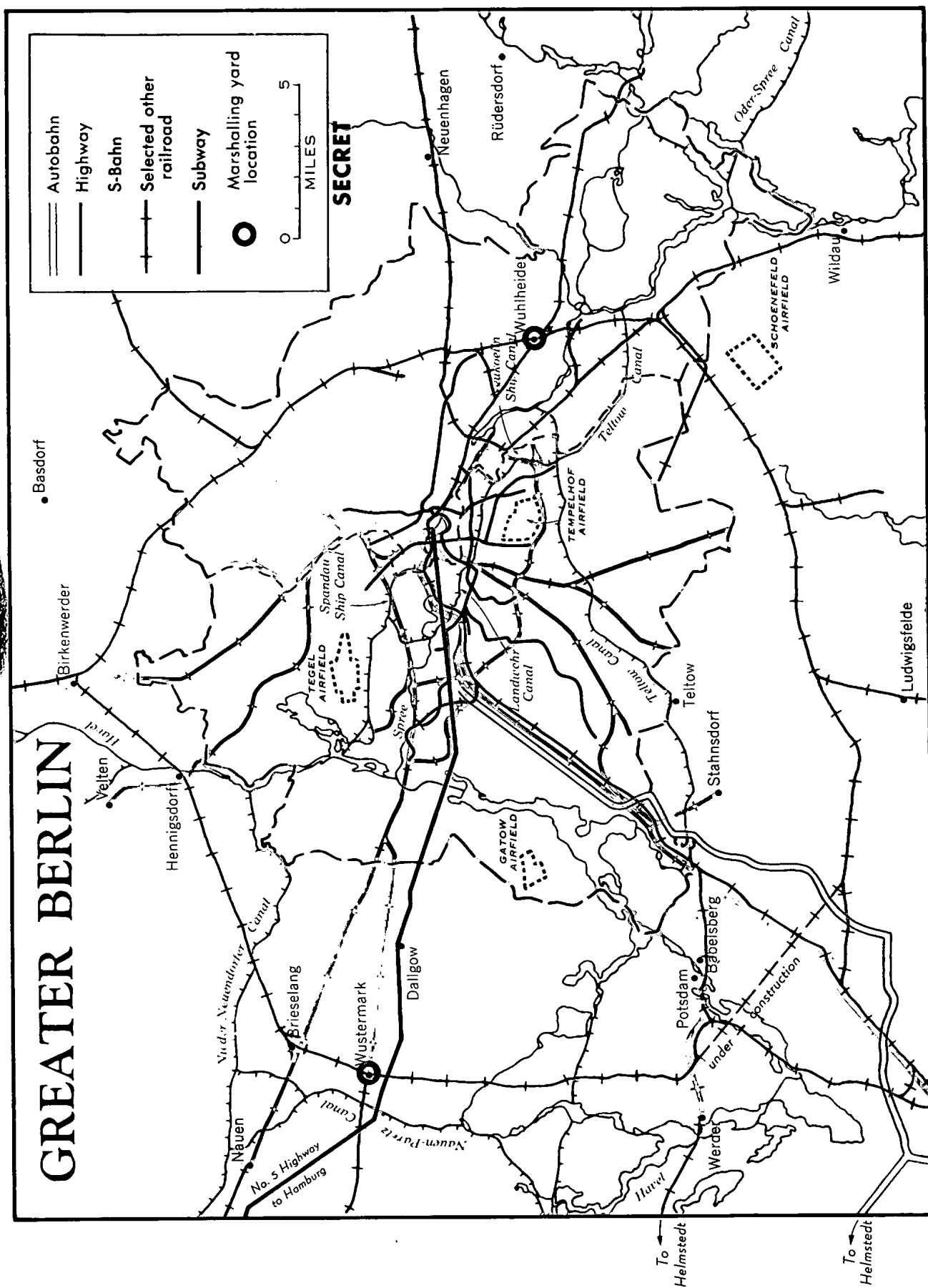
man refugees. Also, it enables the transport of goods out of West Berlin which the Communists will not allow to be shipped by surface transportation. Air movement is probably anchored more firmly in quadripartite decisions on Berlin access than the other forms of transport. It has in the past been subject to a minimum of Soviet interference.

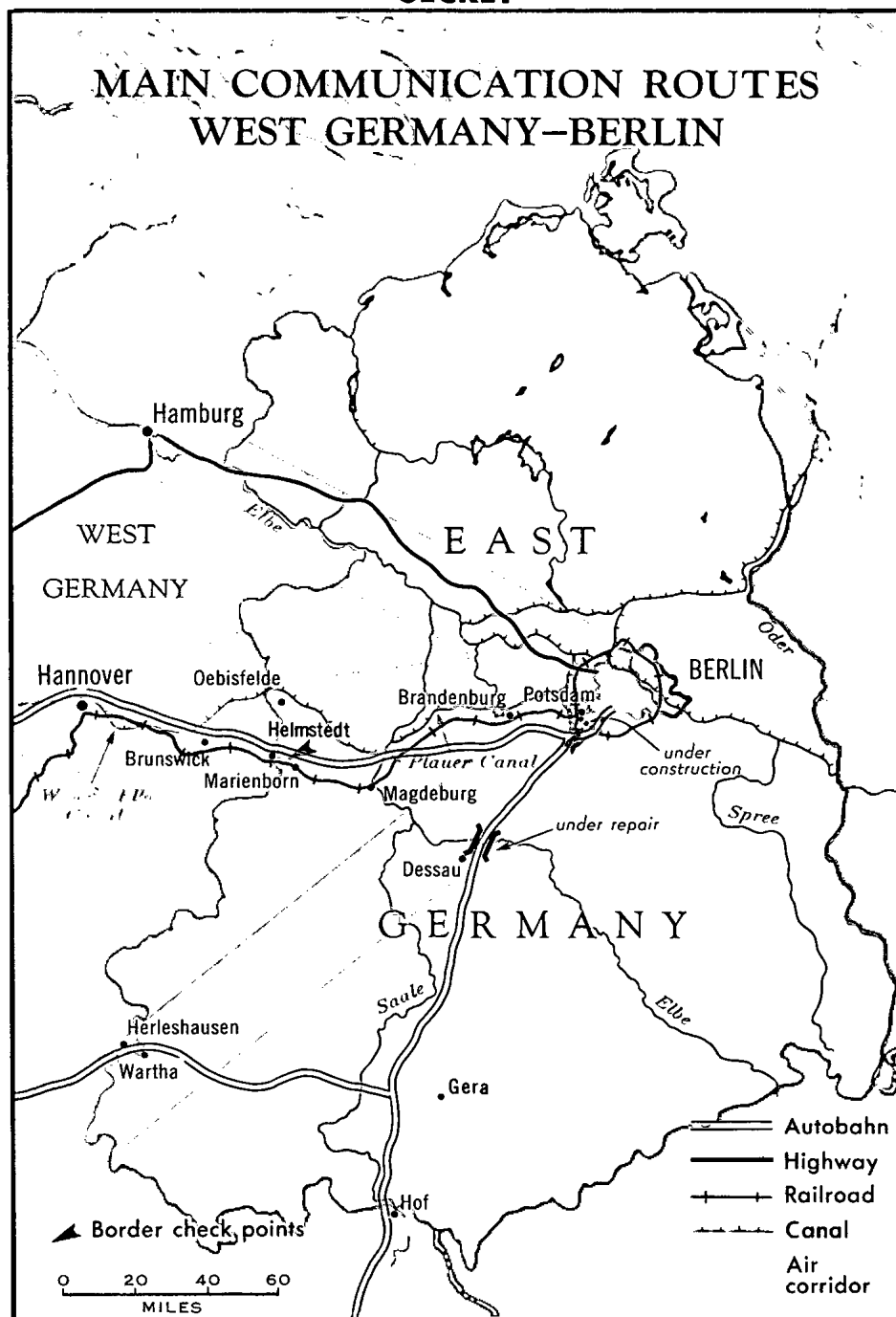
III. INTERNAL SITUATION

The West Berlin economy and population are not dependent to any large extent on the surrounding Communist-controlled territory. Within Berlin only the subway and the elevated system still operate on a city-wide basis and with regard to other utilities only the disposal of West Berlin's sewage depends on East Berlin's cooperation.

Practically all movement by West Berliners into the adjacent Soviet zone is blocked. Intracity movement, however, is still relatively unobstructed although all crossing points on the sector boundary between East and West Berlin have from time to time been either partially or completely closed by the East German authorities.

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